

## Moving Montana Forward Together

### TranPlanMT Heads Toward Implementation

MDT is in the last stages of finalizing the update to the state's long-range multi-modal transportation policy plan. TranPlanMT is now being adapted in consideration of input received during the public comment period and will soon be available on the MDT website.

TranPlanMT defines the policy direction for operating, preserving, and improving Montana's transportation system over the next 20 years. It serves as the guiding policy document for MDT decisions, especially those related to investing Montana's limited transportation funds.

Over the past year, MDT has been seeking and considering public input, analyzing data, and identifying emerging trends as a basis to update the plan.

MDT, partnering with DOWL, has established policy goals in six areas: safety, system preservation and maintenance, mobility and economic vitality, accessibility and connectivity, environmental stewardship, and business operations and management. Each goal area identifies supporting strategies.

Unlike the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, TranPlanMT is not project specific, but sets a policy framework for ongoing department decisions as illustrated in the graphic on the right. For more information about TranPlanMT, go to <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan>.

For questions regarding MDT's TranPlanMT effort, contact Charity Watt at [cwatt@mt.gov](mailto:cwatt@mt.gov) or 444-3439.

*Safety is an overarching goal applied in nearly every MDT decision making process for all programs and projects.*



#### SAFETY

##### GOAL:

*Improve safety for all transportation users to achieve Vision Zero: zero fatalities and zero serious injuries.*

*MDT makes roadway investment decisions according to the following goals listed in order or priority.*



#### SYSTEM PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE

##### GOAL:

*Preserve and maintain existing transportation infrastructure.*



#### MOBILITY AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

##### GOAL:

*Facilitate the movement of people and goods recognizing the importance of economic vitality.*



#### ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

##### GOAL:

*Preserve access to the transportation network and connectivity between modes.*

*Sensitivity to the environment and cost-effective management are underlying goals informing decisions on a broad department-wide basis.*



#### BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

##### GOAL:

*Provide efficient, cost-effective management and operation to accelerate transportation project delivery and ensure system reliability.*



#### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

##### GOAL:

*Support MDT's transportation mission through regulatory compliance and responsible stewardship of the built and natural environment.*



## Federal Surface Transportation Program Status

Federal fiscal year 2017 is wrapping up and MDT is on-target to deliver the program as planned. While 2017 has been a very good year for the program, the view forward, though familiar ground, is less certain. Without agreement on a full 2018 appropriations bill, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the federal government open until December 8. The CR, signed by the President on September 8, provides about two months of pro-rated funding for the nation's surface transportation program at the 2017 levels.

This continued funding ensures that MDT's program of projects continues to move forward uninterrupted in the near term, and MDT staff will continue to monitor and manage our program while considering the status of the full-year appropriations process.

# MDT Project Receives America's Transportation Award Honors

MDT's Kalispell Bypass-US 93 Alternate Route project was among twelve finalists chosen to compete for the 2017 America's Transportation Awards, sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, AAA, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

MDT's project took home top honors in the western region's Quality of Life/Community Development medium category. The three highest-scoring projects from each of four regions advanced to the "Top 12."

Those 12 projects then compete for the Grand Prize, determined by a panel of judges, and the People's Choice Award, selected by the general public through online voting. The top two winning prizes also come with a \$10,000 check, to be donated to a charity or scholarship of the state DOT's choosing.

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the regional competitions judge projects in three categories and sizes:

- Quality of Life/Community Development,
- Best Use of Technology & Innovation, and new this year,
- Operations Excellence.

The projects are also divided into three sizes:

- small projects (less than \$25 million);
- medium projects (\$25 million to \$200 million); and,
- large projects (more than \$200 million).

Learn more about the nominees and the competition at [www.AmericasTransportationAwards.org](http://www.AmericasTransportationAwards.org).

## MDT Hosted Highway-Rail Conference a Success

MDT hosted a Highway-Rail Conference August 29–31 in Helena. More than 160 attendees came from all over Montana and out of state, including city/county commissioners and public works staff, consultants, Public Service Commission staff, and MDT staff that interact with the railroads. Federal government representatives included the Federal Rail Administration (FRA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and a field representative from Senator John Tester's office.

MDT Director Mike Tooley and Traffic and Safety Bureau Chief Roy Peterson welcomed and thanked the attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors for their conference contributions.

Topics included the legal aspects of railroad crossings, quiet zones, positive train control, rail property issues, traffic signals and railroad preemption, railroad HazMat response, rail operations, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and railroad bridge inspections, as well as many more informative topics.

This conference, organized by MDT, FHWA, FRA, railroad representatives, and Montana Operation Lifesaver, provided a networking opportunity for local government entities and railroad representatives and provided valuable information to attendees on ways the railroads are continuing to improve the safety of their operations and interaction with the public.

# Montana's Freight Plan Nearing Completion



*Semi truck on Highway 83 near Salmon Lake*

A draft of Montana's first Freight Plan is available for public review and comment. The plan is required by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. MDT will use the plan to provide guidance for both short and long-term freight-related transportation investment decisions.

The FAST Act established the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) and goals to improve the efficient movement of freight. The Act sets aside about \$12 million annually of Montana's federal transportation apportionment for eligible freight projects. This is not an increase to MDT's overall budget, but rather reserves part of MDT's existing apportionment for eligible freight projects. MDT will continue to make investments from its core federal program to infrastructure improvements that directly benefit the movement of freight in addition to projects specific to the freight program.

The Montana Freight Plan was developed in accordance with 49 USC 70202 and in alignment with MDT's long-range multi-modal policy plan, TranPlanMT. The plan was developed with input and advisement of freight stakeholders doing business in Montana, and will be updated, as required, every five years, or more frequently if necessary.

For more information and to review the draft plan, please visit the freight plan website at: [www.mdt.mt.gov/freightplan/default.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/freightplan/default.shtml).

Copies of the draft plan are available on request by contacting MDT at 444-3439 or [cwatt@mt.gov](mailto:cwatt@mt.gov).

Comments may be submitted through the website or mailed to Charity Watt at the Rail, Transit and Planning Division, 2960 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT 59620; or [cwatt@mt.gov](mailto:cwatt@mt.gov). Submit by October 17 to ensure your comments are adequately reviewed and considered for the final study.

The plan must be in place by December 4, 2017, for MDT to use funding from the new NHFP. For more information, visit the website: <http://mdt.mt.gov/freightplan/default.shtml>.

## Montana Essential Freight Rail Loan Applications

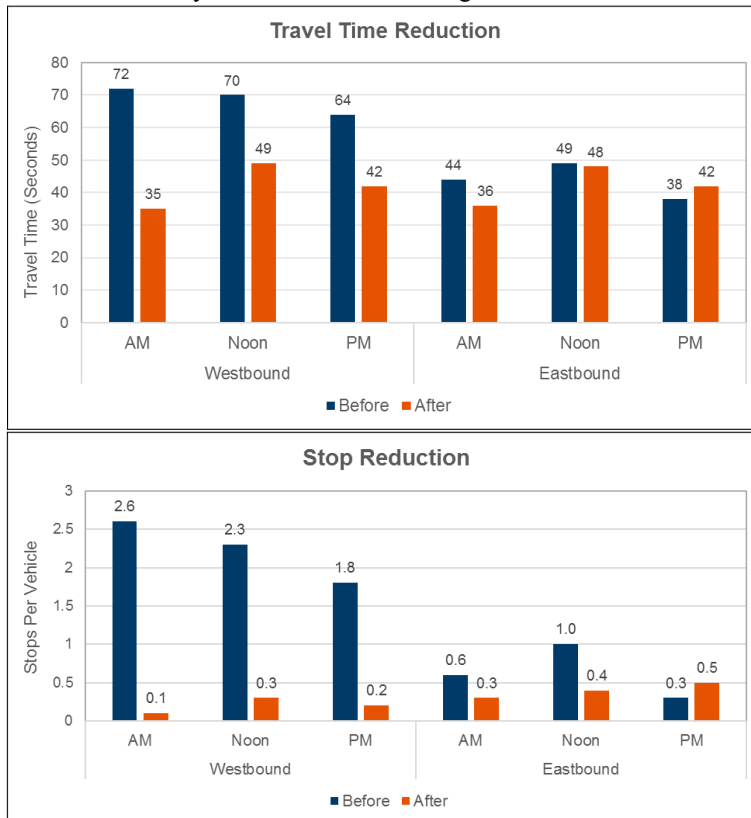
MDT will be soliciting loan applications for the Montana Essential Freight Rail Loan Program beginning in September. For more information, go to: [www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants\\_rail.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_rail.shtml).



# CMAQ Investments Showing Results

Traffic congestion diminishes air quality, which impacts both the environment and health of residents, in addition to delay and wasted fuel. To mitigate these impacts and to support the goal of environmental stewardship and reduction of vehicle emissions, MDT has identified various strategies utilizing federal funding through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program. One strategy to address congestion has been to implement traffic signal timing plans that allow for improved progression along major corridors throughout the state. These projects have been completed on over 40 corridors since 2011; they are planned on eight additional corridors in 2018. Improvement of traffic flow reduces on-road mobile source emissions and is one of the performance measures established by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

These projects are already producing results in relieving congestion. One example, completed in 2017, was located in Browning, along Central Avenue (US Highway 89). This is a key route through the city and averages about 10,000 vehicles per day. Updated traffic signal timings and coordination plans were implemented for three signals along this National Highway route. Signal hardware, detection, and ADA facilities were also upgraded. A before-after analysis showed the following:



This results in savings for travelers, including total savings on Central Avenue of:

- 28 hours saved in travel time per day
- 7,300 hours saved in travel time per year, and
- 9,500 fewer stops a day

For more information about traffic signal operations, contact Sarah Karjala at 444-6255 or [skarjala@mt.gov](mailto:skarjala@mt.gov). For more information on the CMAQ program, contact Katy Callon at 444-7294 or [kcallon@mt.gov](mailto:kcallon@mt.gov).

# Transportation Alternative Project Updates

MDT recently selected 15 Transportation Alternatives (TA) projects from 42 applications received for the 2017-2018 funding cycle totaling \$7.3 million. This brings the total number of TA projects since the program's inception to 52. MDT is looking forward to developing these new projects, which include multi-use paths, sidewalks, ADA upgrades, and path pavement preservation. The projects will be ready for bidding in 2019-2020.

The call for applications for the next two-year (2019-2020) TA funding cycle is tentatively planned for late 2018. MDT will notify those on the TA distribution list when the call for applications is issued and when MDT hosted training events are scheduled to assist with the application process. This information will also be made available on the TA website at [www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta\\_application.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml).

Visit the newly completed projects website: [www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta\\_completed.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_completed.shtml) to see photos and descriptions of recently completed TA projects. To date, 13 projects have been completed, 8 are under construction, and 7 will be let to bid within the next 7 months.

Information about the TA program is available on the MDT TA website. For more information, contact TA Program Manager Dave Holien at 444-6118 or [dholien@mt.gov](mailto:dholien@mt.gov).



TA project Highway 89 path south of Livingston



TA project Three Mile Drive path in Kalispell

# 2018 Highway Safety Plan Approved

The Montana Department of Transportation's Highway Traffic Safety Section has received approval of the Federal Fiscal Year 2018 Highway Safety Plan (HSP) from the National Highway Transportation Safety Agency (NHTSA). The plan is developed following a call for applications from entities who wish to continue or develop a traffic safety project in Montana. Selected projects with evidence-based strategies for increasing seat belt and child safety seat use, and reducing impaired driving are included in the plan for funding. The HSP helps to implement strategies identified in the Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on Montana's roads.

The plan is effective October 1, 2017 and will include some of the following programs and projects:

- Traffic safety public information and education efforts through the Buckle Up Montana coalitions and the Safe On All Roads program on Montana reservations
- The Selective Traffic Enforcement Program that allows local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies to enforce Montana's impaired driving and seat belt laws
- DUI Courts, a specific court system dedicated to changing the behavior of alcohol/drug dependent offenders
- Emergency Medical Services assists the Department of Public Health and Human Services in training emergency responders to improve patient outcome and overall survival of injuries sustained in roadway incidents
- The peer-to-peer teen traffic safety education program to reduce motor vehicle fatalities and serious injuries among teen drivers.

Other fundable areas include motorcycle safety, traffic records data collection and dissemination, and speed reduction. The entire Highway Safety Plan can be reviewed at *Traffic Highway Safety Plan*.

Applications for this funding are accepted each year and due to MDT by March 1. If you have a traffic safety project that you would like to have funded, please visit our website at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/grants/> for more information.

To learn more about our program, contact Janet Kenny at 406-444-7417 or [jakenny@mt.gov](mailto:jakenny@mt.gov).

## Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The STIP is a federally-required publication that shows funding obligations over a five-year period. This program is developed through coordinated efforts of MDT, state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, metropolitan planning organizations, public agencies, transportation providers, citizens, and other interested parties. To view the STIP go to: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml>.

# Back to School Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Tips



It is the beginning of the school year and now is the perfect time to review traffic safety practices. When parents are walking and biking with their children, they are encouraged to talk to them about street safety and show kids how to interact with other pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. Young children need supervision until about age 10 or even older, depending on the child.

It is important for both bicyclists and pedestrians to pay attention and listen to their surroundings. Everyone should avoid wearing headphones that mute their surroundings and avoid cell phone use while walking and biking.

### As a pedestrian:

- Teach children to stop at the edge of the street and look for cars.
- Make eye contact with the driver before crossing the street.
- Look left, right, left, and over their shoulder for traffic.
- Continue to observe traffic when crossing the road.
- Teach them to cross at a signalized intersection when possible.
- It is important to follow the signals carefully and wait until you see the WALK signal before beginning to cross the road.
- Cross at intersections and obey instructions of all traffic and pedestrian control devices.
- Be predictable and wear bright clothing and reflective material, especially at night.

### As a bicyclist:

- Helmets should *always* be worn no matter how slowly one is riding. Start the helmet habit early and parents should promote this by always wearing a helmet themselves.
- Be sure the helmet fits well, is adjusted to the head, and covers the forehead.
- Bicycles are vehicles. Children should not ride bikes in the road until they fully understand traffic rules and show they can follow them.
- When riding in the roadway, ride single file on the right side of the street, and ride in the same direction as vehicle traffic.
- Obey all traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.
- Parents are encouraged to practice with children by riding in a straight line, as well as stopping and speed control.
- It is important for bicyclists to be predictable. Practice looking back and using hand signals without swerving.
- Look left, right, left, and over the shoulder before crossing, turning, or entering the roadway.
- Bicyclists are encouraged to also slow down and look for traffic entering or leaving driveways.
- Ride so others can see you, stay out of drivers' blind spots, and wear bright reflective clothing.
- Bicycles should be equipped with bike lights and reflectors.

For educational and safety resources, as well as technical Assistance, contact MDT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at 444-9273 or [MDTBikePed@mt.gov](mailto:MDTBikePed@mt.gov).

## Annual Transportation Safety Meeting Save the Dates:

October 11-12—Great Northern Hotel, 835 Great Northern Boulevard in Helena

### October 11

#### Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan

This event brings safety partners and stakeholders together to assess Montana's progress in transportation safety. This year's theme is safety culture.

#### Emphasis Areas:

Roadway Departure & Intersection Crashes  
Impaired Driving Crashes  
Occupant Protection

### October 12

#### Highway Safety Program

Recipients of NHTSA grants and anyone interested in the Highway Traffic Safety projects should attend to learn about grant programs and processes.

An agenda is being developed and will be posted at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp-meetings.shtml>.

For more information, contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov), or Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp.shtml>.



**VISION ZERO**  
zero deaths · zero serious injuries

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION**

## Update on Montana Crash Fatalities

Historically, summertime is when traffic deaths and injuries spike in Montana and driver behavior plays a big part in these crashes. As of the third week of September, 138 people have lost their lives in crashes on Montana roadways. The 2017 Montana Highway Patrol's preliminary investigative data indicates that 44 percent were not properly wearing a seat belt, and 55 percent died in crashes where impaired driving is suspected. There has been an increase in motorcycle crash fatalities; as of September 18, 2017, there have been 20 fatalities, 3 more than the same time last year. And tragically, 9 children have lost their lives in crashes in 2017, compared to the average of 4 per year from 2012 through 2016.

MDT wants to remind all road users to buckle up, slow down, use age-appropriate child safety seats, and always have a sober driver. These preventive measures are critical in reaching Vision Zero, zero deaths and zero serious injuries. For more information on safe driving, visit the Vision Zero site: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/>.

Contact the State Highway Traffic Safety Section, Janet Kenny at 444-7417 or [jakenny@mt.gov](mailto:jakenny@mt.gov) for more information.

## MDT Intersection Crash Study Complete

Approximately 13 percent of annual fatal crashes and 24 percent of serious injuries in Montana are the result of intersection crashes. Because this type of crash is one of the predominant types in Montana, MDT completed an Intersection Crash Study.

Some tools and methodologies used in the study were Safety Performance Functions and Level of Service of Safety for many of Montana's intersections, for example, traffic signals, two-way and four-way stops, etc. These tools allow MDT personnel to evaluate crash data and identify intersection of roadways experiencing an over-representation of crashes.

For more information, contact Roy Peterson at 444-9252 or [roy.peterson@mt.gov](mailto:roy.peterson@mt.gov).

## Wildlife on the Move – Be Prepared

One sign that fall has arrived in Montana is the increased movement of wildlife. Breeding season, hunting season, and the general approach of winter means an increased presence of wildlife crossing or near roadways. Be prepared and keep these tips in mind as you travel:

**Be extra cautious at dawn and dusk**—Many animals, especially deer, are most active during these times so be aware, don't use cruise control, and drive at a lower speed. Using high beams at night when there is no oncoming traffic will help spot animals sooner.

**See one? Look for another**—Deer and other wildlife rarely travel alone, so if there is one, there are probably more. Slow down and be prepared for other wildlife to appear.

**Scan the road ahead**—Continually scan the road ahead for signs of animals and movement. Slow down when approaching deer or other wildlife standing near roadsides. They have a tendency to bolt, possibly into traffic. Use emergency flashers to warn oncoming drivers after spotting animal hazards.

**Don't swerve**—Use brakes if an impact is imminent. Swerving away from animals can lead to head-on collisions, impacts with objects on the side of the road, or rolling the vehicle.

Avoiding collision with wildlife comes down to expecting the unexpected, being sober behind the wheel, driving at lower speeds, and giving full attention to driving. The best way to prevent injury for drivers and passengers is to be properly buckled.

**If you hit an animal**—Pull over onto the road shoulder, turn on emergency flashers, and watch for traffic before exiting the vehicle. Do not try to remove an animal from the roadway unless it is safe to do so and it is dead; an injured animal is dangerous. For help and to report a collision, call appropriate law enforcement: the city police, county sheriff, or the Montana Highway Patrol at (855) 647-3777.



## New Columbus Rest Area Hailed as State of the Art

Less than a year after opening, MDT's new rest area at Columbus is considered among the best of its kind by the traveling public. The energy efficient building has a heat recovery ventilator resulting in significant energy reduction, in-floor heat, and a surveillance security system.

Comments left during a rest area survey conducted on July 25, 2017, were overwhelmingly positive with users from across the United States and Canada indicating it is "much better than other rest areas they have used" and "This rest area is cleaner than rest areas in other states." A traveler from Savoy, Texas states, "I have not seen a better rest area in the nearly 4,000-mile vacation we are on." Another traveler from Seattle, Washington wrote, "I travel quite a bit and have never seen a rest area equal to this one in cleanliness and safety. Loved this design!" Other users have commented, "Thank you for putting in this rest stop. It's a life saver. Awesome!" Also, people had a very positive reaction to the pet facilities, with one user stating, "Love the fire hydrant in the pet area!"

CDM Construction and CWG Architects helped make the new Columbus Rest Area a success. This innovative rest area was completed ahead of schedule in December 2016.



*New Rest Area located on I-90 near Columbus*

### Need a break while traveling in Montana?

MDT has enhanced the MDT Travel Info App and the Travel Information Map with the addition of rest area locations. You can:

- find the nearest rest area,
- view status information,
- see a list of amenities and
- view a picture of the site.

Go to: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/mobile.shtml>

## Local Transit Providers Receive \$2 Million for Capital Investments

MDT is investing \$2 million for local transit equipment and infrastructure. Vehicles ranging from 6-passenger minivans to a 35-passenger heavy duty bus will be added to fleets around the state. One bus storage facility will also be built. Twenty-one communities will benefit from these capital investments.

Funding is awarded through a competitive process, with applications ranked based on need and funding availability. MDT encouraged agencies in Montana communities to work together to pool transit resources to better serve their communities. Reliable transportation is important to quality of life in a large state like Montana.

If you have any questions or need additional information, contact David Jacobs at [dajacobs@mt.gov](mailto:dajacobs@mt.gov) or 444-9192.

## New Research Projects Approved

MDT recently approved the following six new research projects:

- Alkali-Silica Reactivity in the State of Montana
- Concrete-Filled Steel Tube to Concrete Pile Cap Connections: Further Evaluation/Improvement of Analysis/Design Methodologies
- Feasibility of Non-Proprietary Ultra-High Performance Concrete (UHPC) for use in Highway Bridges in Montana: Phase 2
- Large Scale Laboratory Testing of Geosynthetics in Roadway Applications
- Testing "Wildlife-Friendly" Fence Modifications to Manage Livestock and Wildlife Movements
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Applications for Montana Transportation Corridors

These projects were approved through a new process this year, beginning with the Stage 1: Research Project Idea form being submitted by March 31.

For more information on initiating research projects and the new solicitation, prioritization, and selection of research projects go to: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/solicit.shtml>.

For more information on these six new projects, contact Sue Sillick at [ssillick@mt.gov](mailto:ssillick@mt.gov) or 444-7693.

# Standing Tall After a Century: The Rainbow Transmission Line

*By Jon Axline, MDT Historian*

Remnants of Montana's industrial past are everywhere to be seen. Like the Smith Mine from the last issue of *Newsline*, many of those relics are close to the state's highways. Some aren't much to look at and a few we take for granted. They certainly represent a different time in Montana's colorful history. A time when mining dominated the state's economy and much of the industrial development was geared toward the mining industry. Motorists traveling on Interstate 15 at Elk Park north of Butte might notice a line of electrical transmission towers that march across the valley parallel to the Interstate. Built in the first decade of the twentieth century, the steel towers still carry electricity between Great Falls and Butte. It may be the oldest transmission line still in use in the United States. Part of that power line crosses through the Helena Valley. Two towers, in fact, sit very close to a new MDT roundabout project.

Montana electrified during in the early twentieth century. Newly completed hydroelectric dams on the upper Missouri River near Great Falls provided electricity to the mines, mills, and smelters of Great Falls, Butte, and Anaconda. The power generated at the dams was also used for domestic and commercial purposes and provided the motive power for the Milwaukee Road and Butte, Anaconda and Pacific railroads along with the Butte public trolley system. Erected by the Great Falls Water Power & Townsite Company (GFWPTC) in 1909, the two transmission towers, located at the intersection of York Road and Lake Helena Drive northeast of Helena are just two features in a 128-mile linear site that currently includes 2,030 transmission towers.

The transmission line was designed by Max Hebgen. It followed the shortest distance between Rainbow Falls Dam in Great Falls and a substation outside of Butte. Work began on erecting the towers on July 28, 1909 and the project was completed on May 20, 1910. Milliken Brothers of Staten Island, New York fabricated the towers to Hebgen's specifications. Erection of the towers began in Great Falls and moved south to Butte. Each tower weighed about 2,000 pounds and cost \$133 (\$3,500 in 2017 dollars) each to install, including footings, assembly, and erection.

Hebgen oversaw the construction of the line. He employed a maximum of five work crews on the project, ranging in number from 20 to 80 men depending on the type of terrain. The workers assembled the towers on the ground and hoisted the towers into place using a simple crane, called a gin pole. On average, the workers could raise 10 towers during a nine-hour shift. On its best day, the men erected 26 towers. Each tower carried redundant wires to ensure uninterrupted service in case lightning or vandalism knocked out a line.

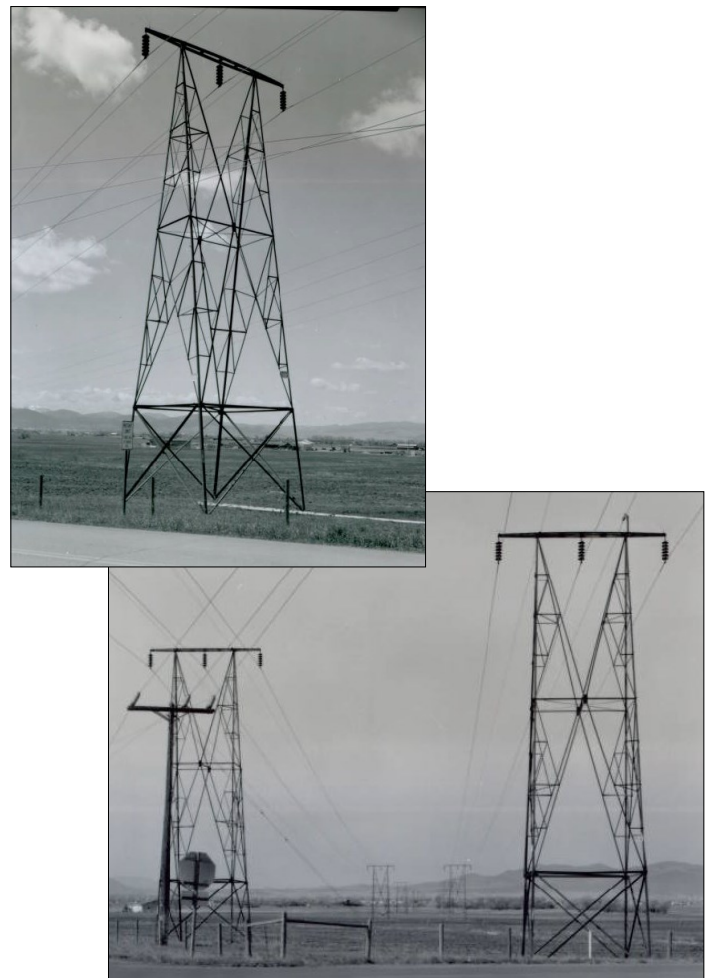
Testing of the power line began in early June 1910 and it was ready to carry power from Rainbow Falls Dam to Butte two days later. The dam began providing power to the Butte mines and to the Anaconda smelter by the middle of August 1910. The total cost of the line was \$270,152 (\$7,109,273 in 2017 dollars).

Each 42-foot tall tower carried three O.B. & S. six strand hemp centered, hard-drawn copper cables manufactured by Roebling & Sons, which also provided the ground wires. From each conductor was suspended a "string of six 10-inch disc insulators furnished by the Ohio Brass Company. Each disc received a factory test for electrostatic and mechanical defects before shipment." The line

utilized 780 miles of copper wire, 520 miles of steel wires, and 7,504 ceramic insulators. The original power lines remained in operation until 1960 when the Montana Power Company replaced them. The company, however, didn't replace the insulators and they are still in use after 107 years. When the line became operational, it was the second power line of this type in North America, (the first being the transmission line from Niagara Falls to Toronto).

The generators in Rainbow Falls Dam on the Missouri River at Great Falls produced 6,600 volts of electricity that was boosted to 102,000 volts and then sent out over the wires to Butte. In Butte, the voltage was stepped down to a level that could be used for the mining and smelting operations and for the city trolley system.

The historic transmission line is easily visible from Interstate 15 and a host of primary and secondary roads between Butte and Great Falls. Most folks take electricity and the delivery systems of it for granted. In the early twentieth century, though, it was a big deal, worthy of note in engineering journals. Even something as simple as a transmission tower can have great historical significance.



*Transmission towers located in the Helena Valley are still being used today.*

MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment.

*Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit, and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.*



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MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information, call (406)444-3423, TTY (800)335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

### **MDT Wants Your Comments On New Projects**

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit [www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans\\_comm/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf), <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml> or call 1-800-714-7296. You can mail comments on proposed projects to MDT at MDT Project Analysis Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 or e-mail them to: [mdtnewprojects@mt.gov](mailto:mdtnewprojects@mt.gov).

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### **Contact Information**

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 800-335-7592.

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